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Contact Us:

General Inquiries: info@tmppllc.com
Andrea Tromberg: atromberg@tmppllc.com
Scott Morris: smorris@tmppllc.com
Anthony Poulin: apoulin@tmppllc.com

1515 South Federal Highway
Suite 100
Boca Raton, FL 33432
561-344-4101 - Local
800-338-4101 - Toll Free



Letter from the Editor

NOW MORE THAN EVER, Diversity and Inclusion is a topic on the forefront of our minds. Organizations are revisiting principles and reallocating resources to ensure they more accurately reflect and respond to today's societal expectations. Corporations are implementing programs designed to raise awareness of the importance and value of a vibrant and diverse workforce that reflects our society and understands their customer base. As if a light bulb flickered on, individuals across our country learned these issues are wider and deeper than previously imagined, and they are taking deliberate steps to more completely understand these issues and to aid in a collective course-correction. Personally, my husband and I purchased and are reading some books in preparation for the birth of our first child, with hopes we can raise him to be equipped with tools to fight inequality as he grows, and gain a better understanding ourselves. There is much more that needs to be accomplished and taking steps such as these only begin to scratch the surface.

With this edition, we wanted to do our part to engage in conversations about Diversity and Inclusion. We do not hold out this edition as all-encompassing or thorough, and we acknowledge that not all viewpoints are represented by this collection of work. In fact, reading the collection as the articles came in illuminated the fact that we have work to do in order to lift up voices of those underrepresented in our industry. We hope these articles can help us establish a path towards a brighter future for all.

Our first article is from Julia Keys about generational diversity in the workplace. Julia focuses on different age groups' impact on organizations and how best to communicate between older and younger generations, and to understand our differences. Next, we have an article by Michelle Garcia Gilbert which outlines the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts at global companies, and what we can learn from how they are addressing the issue. Sara Costanzo's work, titled "The Glass Ceiling, Revisited," defines the glass ceiling and instructs on effective strategies to break it. We also have an article from Julius Drayton, who discusses the importance of talking to your staff about diversity and inclusion.

This edition also incorporates a collection of articles on WILL members' personal and professional experiences with diversity and inclusion. Marissa Yaker digs down to a personal level with her reflection piece on embracing diversity and inclusion. We also have contributions from Talyn Guercio, who writes from experience as a working mother; Sydney Rasch, who writes about dialogue and sensitivity in a



workplace with evolving gender norms; and Karyne Nguyen, who shares her story of growth as an Asian American.

Finally, we have two of our recurring pieces. First, a new "10 Things to Know About," featuring Lila Fenwick who paved the way for a more diverse legal field when she became the first African American woman to graduate from Harvard Law School. We also have the return of our new regular article, "Tell Me Something Good!" I hope this piece about positive things happening to fellow industry members can bring you some joy.

We have much to learn from and about each other to make a difference for a brighter and more equitable future. Discussing diversity and inclusion at times can be like crossing rough and tumultuous waters. While these articles address only the tip of the iceberg, I hope by beginning the conversation we can do our part to make a positive impact on our industry. **W**

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jillian H. Wilson". The script is fluid and cursive.

JILLIAN H. WILSON, ESQ.

Partner

Wilson & Associates, PLLC

jjwilson@thewilsonlawfirm.com

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Tell Me Something Good

BY: MAGGIE GARDEN, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
BENDETT & MCHUGH, P.C.
MGARDEN@BMPC-LAW.COM



IN A WORLD that often seems so uncertain and where the only constant is change, the ALFN WILLED Editorial Committee thought it would be an excellent time to celebrate the women in our industry who are keeping things positive and spreading good vibes in the world by highlighting their efforts in a new WILLED Column called: “Tell Me Something Good.” If you or anyone you know in the industry is up to Something Good, we want to know about it and acknowledge it in an upcoming edition of WILLED. Please send a brief write up with the name of the person you are nominating and what they've been up to. It could be fundraising efforts, or a recent promotion or accomplishment. Please submit your information to: srosen@alfn.org and mgarden@bmpc-law.com.



HELPING SHINE THE LIGHT (LITERALLY) FOR A GOOD CAUSE...

For the last 9 years, **Jennifer Dlugolecki** of Firefly Legal has been helping coordinate fundraising efforts and raising awareness for the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition (NOCC). One of those efforts includes helping illuminate the Chicago skyline by having businesses light up the office space in their buildings with teal (the color of NOCC). Jennifer also helped support the Together in Teal- No Boundaries movement to show unwavering support for the more than 22,000 women affected by ovarian cancer each year. Jennifer started these efforts to honor her mother's memory and has helped raise over \$15,000.



MAKING AN IMPACT WITH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EFFORTS...

Diversity, inclusion, and racial bias are on many people's minds these days, and increasing awareness is even more critical than ever. With that in mind, Affinity Consulting Group's Managing Partner, **Debbie Foster**, has become a student in those topics. She has been reading everything she can get her hands on, listening to Podcasts, and learning as much as she can. She is taking that knowledge and using it to guide the Affinity team through open and honest conversations, addressing the hard things, as well as holding internal educational webinars. It is helping us all become more aware of implicit biases and what we can all do to “do better” in this area. Our company isn't perfect, and we have historically, not by design or desire, been without a lot of racial diversity, although we do have gender and sexual orientation diversity. Debbie is taking a proactive approach and is focused on becoming more diverse and inclusive as a company, which will be awesome for us all in the long run.



HELPING MAKE MILES INTO MIRACLES...

For the past 10 years, Bendett & McHugh, P.C. has organized an event called Miles for Miracles 5k and Family Fun Walk/Run to benefit Connecticut Children's Medical Center with **Maggie Garden** serving as the event's Race Director since it first began. This year, the event was held virtually to allow people to participate while safely socially distancing with friends and family at their choice of venue with the mindset of: "Your pace at your place." Despite the event looking much different from years past, Miles for Miracles was once again very well received by the community. Including this year's contributions, the event has raised over \$62,000 for Connecticut Children's Medical Center since it started back in 2010, with each year it continues to grow thanks to all the folks at Bendett & McHugh, P.C.



A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE, LEADER AND VOLUNTEER...

Mendy Goodman is the Stern & Eisenberg Chief Operations Officer. Mendy joined the S&E family over five years ago, she is a versatile and strategic operations management executive with over 20 years of experience in the real estate default industry. She has been successful in leading all phases of real estate activities such as process development, improving firm efficiencies, and financial reporting. Mendy's strengths stand in her ability to translate objectives into actionable plans and provide decisive leadership to a multi-functional staff. Mendy is passionate about creating processes that ultimately provide exceptional client efficiencies and strong partnerships. Mendy is a persistent optimist who is committed to the firm's core values and guiding principles of Commitment to Excellence, Respect, Efficiency, Accountability, and Creativity.

Everything just shared about Mendy's S&E work ethic is identical to her dedication and commitment to the House of Hope Animal Rescue located in Maryland, <https://hohanimalrescue.org/>. Mendy is a House of Hope Board Member focused on fundraising, event planning, gathering in kind donations for the dogs while assisting with all of the organizations business needs. Mendy continues to enhance her learnings to educate and promote House of Hope through social media, organizing walks/fundraisers, creating events, and researching opportunities to ensure the shelter can service the community and provide the unconditional support to her rescue dogs. Mendy's tireless efforts have led to dogs from all walks of life, whether it be a stray, abused, or unwanted animal, be provided with a second chance. Her passion to show these dogs affection, medical care, a loving place to live while waiting for adoption is selfless! Mendy spends her free time washing, feeding, walking, and playing with the rescue dogs.

In addition to Mendy's devotion to animals, she shares a similar compassion for Charitable Associations. Mendy has participated in many different events for the causes she supports, such as Breast Cancer Awareness walks, Samaritan's purse Operation Christmas child, cooking at homeless shelters, supplying holiday gifts to the local women's shelter, organizing food drive donations with the S&E staff. Mendy's aspiration is for every person and animal to have health, shelter, love and happiness. Mendy continuous philanthropists' efforts in support of these causes, without seeking any attention or recognition, further demonstrates her altruistic character traits

Mendy continues to be a guiding light for the firm as a leader and voice for the staff. **W**

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT
Lila Fenwick



BY JILLIAN H. WILSON, ESQ., PARTNER
WILSON & ASSOCIATES, PLLC
JIWILSON@THEWILSONLAWFIRM.COM

Harvard Law School graduate Lila A. Fenwick at an event in the early 2000s. By Courtesy of David Colby Reed

IN THIS ISSUE, I wanted to highlight a woman who truly broke barriers in our field and helped pave a way for a more diverse and vibrant legal community. This edition's ten facts are about Lila Fenwick, the first African American woman to graduate from Harvard Law School, and a truly impressive figure in the history of our profession.

— 1 —

Not only did Lila Fenwick graduate from Harvard Law School in the Class of 1956, but she went on to continue her studies at the London School of Economics.¹

— 2 —

Lila was born in 1923 to immigrants from Trinidad, and was raised in New York City.²

— 3 —

After completing her studies, she went on to work for the Division of Human Rights, at the United Nations.³

— 4 —

During her time at Harvard, she was required to live in segregated housing.⁴

— 5 —

Lila Fenwick graduated from law school the year before Ruth Bader Ginsburg began her law school career.⁵

— 6 —

Both Ginsburg and Fenwick tell a story about a dinner hosted by the Dean, during which all of the women law students were invited and then required to defend why they were occupying a spot at Harvard Law that could have gone to a man.⁶

— 7 —

Lila practiced with the United Nations until her section was moved to Geneva in the mid-70s.⁷

— 8 —

Prior to attending Harvard Law, Lila attended Barnard College⁸

— 9 —

While practicing for the Division of Human Rights she focused on gender, racial, and religious discrimination, the protection of minorities and indigenous populations, and the right to emigrate from oppressive countries.⁹

— 10 —

Lila Fenwick passed away on April 4, 2020 at her home in Manhattan from complications due to COVID-19. She was 87¹⁰ **W**

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lila_Fenwick

² *Id.*

³ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/4/21/lila-fenwick-obituary/>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/13/obituaries/lila-fenwick-dead-coronavirus.html>

⁶ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/4/21/lila-fenwick-obituary/> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/13/obituaries/lila-fenwick-dead-coronavirus.html>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lila_Fenwick

⁹ <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/4/21/lila-fenwick-obituary/>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lila_Fenwick

UNDERSTANDING
Generational Diversity
IN THE WORKPLACE

BY
JULIA KEYS



IN THE YEAR 2020, the topic of diversity in the workforce has gained more significance in business than ever before. Forward thinking talent acquisition leaders and human resource executives are focused on Diversity and Inclusion policies and practices within their organizations. The global economy, rapidly evolving technology, and an increasingly diversified consumer base mean businesses must adapt to remain relevant and successful.

In the financial services industry, one of the least talked about but critically important topics for financial servicers is organizational studies examining generational diversity within a particular industry. Simply stated, generational diversity is defined by a company's representation of an employee base consisting of wide age brackets within the workplace.

For the first time in history, there are currently five workforce generations! Check your generational awareness on the next page for identifying accompanying core values along with a few defining moments in history.





Traditionalists

Traditionalists are regarded as the hard workers, evolving out of the depression period, finding ways to obtain their education during times of limited resources. They are typically incredibly loyal to their employers. They prefer personal interactions and physical paperwork as opposed to electronic driven tasks or emails. Traditionalists thrive on organization, clear procedures, and formalities.

- Recommended for management: In-person coaching/development, recognition for their formal method and protocols for accuracy, go-to for training among peers, and ability to maintain clear boundaries
- Management should avoid: Disorganization, being overly personal, or using later generational dialect

Birth Years

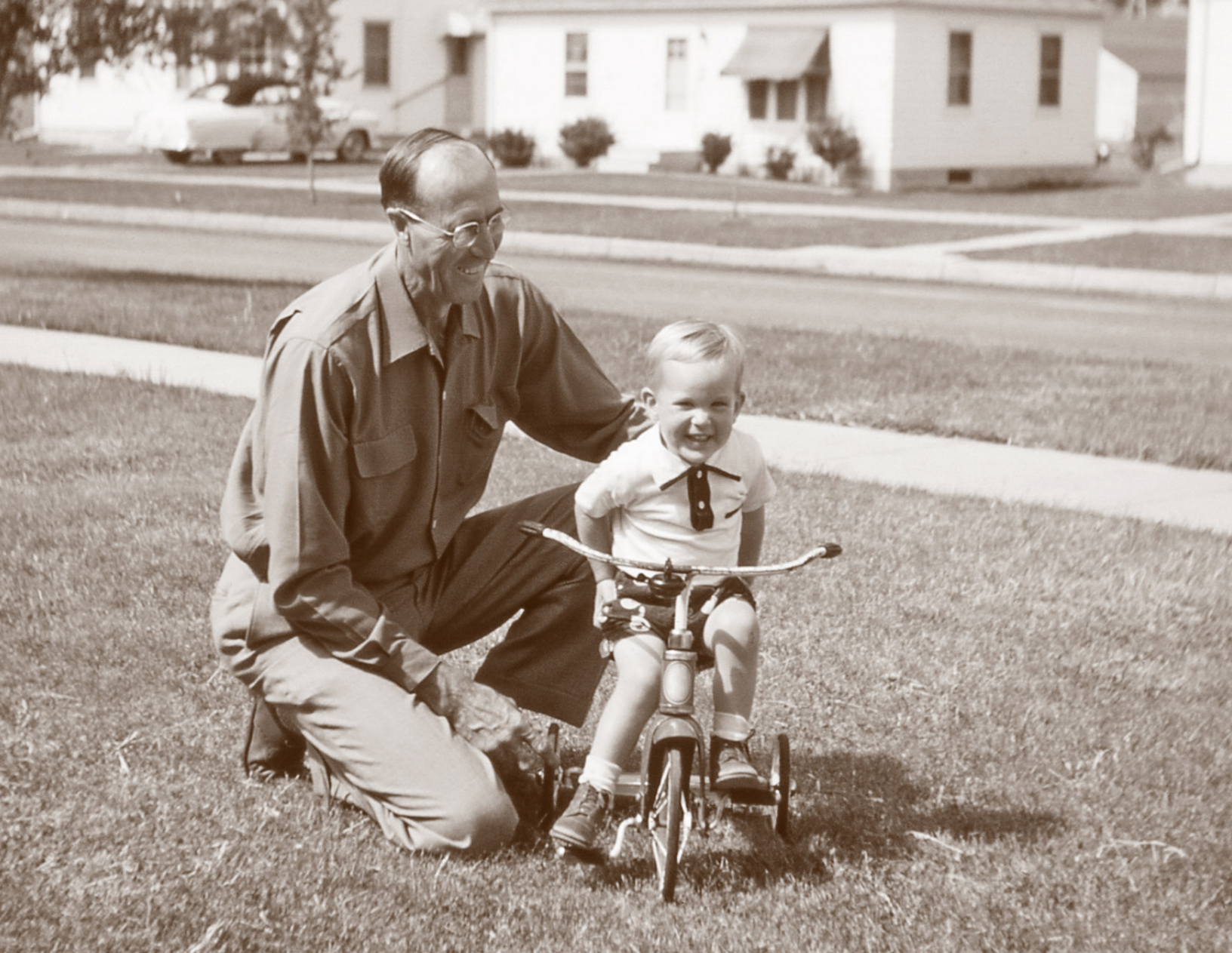
Born 1925 to 1945

Core Values

Dedication, loyalty, hard work, patriotism, respect for authority and the common good

Defining Moments

The Great Depression, World War II, Lindberg, FDR



Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are now in their late fifties and sixties and are currently holding the highest ranked positions within their organizations. They are incredibly ambitious, genuinely loyal, and hard-working, much like that of their seniors, and they typically prefer to work from the office.

- Recommended for management: Appreciate their practical methods and work ethic, encourage digital use of technology, respect and value their contributions and loyalty, recognition for years of service
- Management should avoid: Unexplained workplace changes, indirect communications

Birth Years

Born 1946 to 1964

Core Values

Optimism, personal gratification and growth

Defining Moments

Civil Rights Movement, JFK assassination, The Space Race, Beatlemania, Rosa Parks and women's movement for equality



Generation X

Generation X are currently in their forties and fifties. Here is where a little more prominent shift begins in the work habits in comparison with baby boomers and traditionalists. Generation X focuses on being able to balance their work and family and is dedicated and determined to make time for both. Much like their seniors, they are hard-working as well while also remaining very flexible. They anticipate flexible work hours, schedules, and relaxed working conditions.

- Recommended for management: Extend flexible working hours, clearly define requirements and expectations, grant autonomy for independence, set and track goals, continuously provide new challenges, spot recognition
- Management should avoid: Micro-management of tasks, overload of work assignments, required shift deviations

Birth Years

Born 1965 to 1980

Core Values

Diversity, techno literacy, fun, informality, embracing work-life balance

Defining Moments

Challenger Incident, Woodstock, Berlin Wall, Energy Crisis, AIDS, MLK assassination, Rodney King, Watergate scandal, Lockerbie flight bombing, Jonestown, Rise of the PC



Generation Y

(Millennials)

Generation Y (Millennials) are currently in their late twenties and thirties. They are recognized for being tech-savvy, highly motivated and creative innovators. Being a part of a bigger community is important to this generation. They are more likely to be risk-takers since most millennials will not hesitate to switch their organization every 2-3 years. They embrace change, are extremely goal-oriented and work very well in team settings. Unlike traditionalists and baby boomers, generation Y typically prefer electronic communications and tasks. Millennials are also the generation responsible for introducing the trend of working from home.

- Recommended for management: Provide new and rewarding challenges, frequent guidance, feedback and recognition, mentoring, motivation, establish realistic goals, recognize burn-out mode, public/ social recognition
- Management should avoid: Flexible shifts, micro-management of tasks

Birth Years

Born 1981 to 2000

Core Values

Optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement

Defining Moments

Y2K, Terrorism, Oklahoma City Bombing, Columbine, Rise of social media, Google founding as search engine, The tech revolution begins



Generation Z

Generation Z are currently the youngest and newest generation to enter the workforce. They are extremely creative and educated. They seek new adventures in their workplace and in their personal life. They are motivated by engaging and enjoyable working environments.

- Recommended for management: Provide thorough and detailed training, create excitement, motivation and a fun working environment, set clear expectations and provide continuous challenges, embrace new technology, regularly communicate future goals and company stability
- Management should avoid: Evaluating work performance based on longevity, restricting work from home policy

Birth Years

Born 2001 to 2020

Core Values

Competitive, diverse, independent, entrepreneurial, techno savvy, educated, earth conscious

Defining Moments

911, Smart phones, Iraq/ Afghan wars, The rise of influencers, Me Too Movement, March for our Lives, 2008 Financial crisis, Opioid crisis, Obama election, Gay marriage legalization, COVID-19

Generational Humor



"Is there a problem dear? The Geek squad said the computer was frozen so I am unfreezing it with your blow dryer."

—Traditionalists

"I assert dominance over millennials by responding to their texts with phone calls."

— GenX

"Please sign the attached petition called "Next Generation" consisting of road signs placed on every street corner in the nation reading "SLOW DOWN, children texting."

— Millennials

"If we all just switch to cursive and stick shift cars, we could cripple an entire generation."

— Baby Boomers

"If we all get face tattoos, they can't not hire ALL of us!"

— GenZ

Generational differences most certainly exist and are recognized by many of the world's most successful companies as a necessary component within their Diversity and Inclusion guiding principles. As leaders of organizations seek to identify effective opportunities for enhanced productivity, boosting morale, and building effective teams, research suggests that age diversity in the workplace may actually advance organizational performance. Embracing generational differences provides invaluable resources to companies by providing accessibility to a wide variety of skill-

sets, experiences and perspectives, which could prove significant to the foundation of its customer base and clients alike.

To illustrate the generational perspectives when considering an ideal work environment, I connected virtually with eight of the mortgage banking industry's top leaders and professionals. Note the differences in generational perception when similarly ranked operational managers and executives considered pursuing a new opportunity within the industry. Their names are redacted to protect their privacy confidentiality.

Q1: What would you consider are top priorities and/or considerations for you in the 2020 job market?

Traditionalists: “My top priority would be generous compensation, full health care, community reputation, core values, success and longevity potential of an organization’s achievements.”
–Deputy General Counsel

Baby Boomers: “My top three priorities in considering my next chapter consists of: 1) A challenging role within a successful organization 2) The ability to influence internal policies 3) Having the ability to mentor others.”
– Vice President, Servicing

GenX: “Strike a balance between family and career along with corporate culture.”
–Senior Director, Servicing

Millennials: “Finding that niche opportunity that continues to allow for professional advancement within an organization; one that promotes and identifies subject matter expertise.”
– Executive, Secondary Market

Gen Z: “Growth potential, Autonomy to make decisions in a leadership role, competitive benefits and perks, full compensation package with remote capabilities.”
– Loss Mitigation, Underwriting

Q2: What stands out to you and draws your attention to a particular organization when considering opportunities in the current job market?

Traditionalists: “The track record for an organization’s turnover and advancement rate for promoting from within, growth potential, along with their views of work-life balance appeal to me personally. The organization’s sustainability and success rate, especially during the current state of a global crisis.”
–Deputy General Counsel

Baby Boomers: “Diversity within the management team, the company’s overall size and reputation of the company in the industry.”
–Vice President, Servicing

GenX: “Testimonials from industry colleagues and growth opportunities for unique and innovative ideas.”
–Senior Director, Servicing

Millennials: “One of the things that I most enjoy about my position is process improvement and innovation. One of the most important things to me is a forward thinking company that embraces a diverse culture and technology that runs counter to the way things have been done in the past.”
–Default Operations Manager

Gen Z: “Culture, full compensation and benefit package including incentives that exist beyond that of standard salary brackets.”
–Loss Mitigation, Underwriting

Q3: Do you prefer to work directly for a specific generation? Please elaborate on why you do or not have a preference.

Traditionalists: “I would much prefer to work for someone in my age bracket as they tend to better understand the work habits of employees in my generation. I do believe that generational differences exist and relatability is important to build effective teams.”
–Deputy General Counsel

Baby Boomers: “I prefer to work for a younger generation primarily because they bring two necessities to the table 1 being energy and 2 being a different and fresh perspective. I do feel strongly that every organization needs to have a mix of generational attributes as they are important to the companies structure.”
–Vice President, Servicing

GenX: “No, I prefer a diversity of thought and skill levels.”

–Senior Director, Servicing

Millennials: Not necessarily, but I will say that I have found the experience of those that have been in the industry for long periods of time to be an indispensable asset.” *“Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it.” –Edmund Burke*

–Default Operations Manager

Gen Z: “Yes, I prefer to work for my same generation as I find them to be much more relatable and approachable.”

–Loss Mitigation, Underwriting

Q4: If applicable, within your leadership role, what generational differences have you identified with your direct reports and how do these differences impact your team, department and/or organization, specifically?

Traditionalists: “From my experience, there are varying generational distinctions that tend to exist more often among individuals, as opposed to the stigma attached to generational age classifications, collectively. I am of the opinion that the most effective managerial approach requires regular maintenance and enhancement of personal relationships between leadership and valued employees, now more than ever before to retain valued talent.”

–Deputy General Counsel

Baby Boomers: “From the baby boomer to current generation, I have observed a lack of focus on career and improving ones individual skillset to be successful in their career. Some of those factors contributing to this could include the fact that the individual does not intend to remain in their role or with the organization long-term. I would add that there is a tilt towards being comfortable with a current job verses a longer term vision for what they could be doing outside of that role and determination to acquire the skills necessary to get there.”

–Vice President, Servicing

GenX: “For gen z and millennials, I recognize that their priorities may be different and therefore, the connections forged with them may require differing approaches.”

–Senior Director, Servicing

Millennials: “A recent trend has seen companies offering voluntary early retirement packages while also recruiting new talent through college programs. Companies must continuously strive to find the right balance of creative talent and ideas while retaining the experience and deep knowledge base of tenured professionals.”

–Default Operations Manager

Gen Z: “I do not have direct reports however, I do work with a team and I notice that many of my colleagues who are older generations are much quicker to catch on to a new initiative. They provide a pretty significant amount of knowledge to the fresh talent joining our teams. I learn a great deal from them.”

–Loss Mitigation, Underwriting



Consider generational candidacy as an asset and strength to your organization.

While questions one and two were similar, notice that by slightly altering the wording of the sentence, this yielded a more in-depth or even a shift in the generational responses I received. In addition, the bulk of the interview questions posed are captured above; however, additional feedback was provided during the course of these conversations. The Millennial and GenZ responses were geared more in the direction of a genuine desire for flexibility, travel, company perks such as gym memberships, tuition reimbursement programs, and bonus compensation. They also valued diversity in the workplace and diligently striving to overcome generational stigma and bias. In contrast, GenX, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalists remained more focused on organizational stability, overall compensation, their stability, and longevity as their primary considerations.

Let's now examine the challenging question sought by many industry leaders remaining:

“HOW DO WE GET IT RIGHT?”

As employers seek to bridge the multi-generational workforce gap, the first step in doing so is to simply recognize the generational differences. During the onset of the recruiting process, it is important for key leadership to have confidence that the expectations are attainable and that the company vision is embraced by the candidate. Consider generational can-

didacy as an asset and strength to your organization. Companies fostering generational diversity preserve a much more sustainable workforce given their core competencies, different perspectives, ideas, strategies, and creative solutions, all of which support the company's evolution.

Equally important to an organization is to retain their generationally diverse talent pool. The best way to accomplish this goal is to develop personal working relationships with employees based on authenticity and relatability. Leaders who encourage open dialogue and can adjust their communication styles when necessary, preserve a much lower turnover rates.

Finally, fostering a culture of consistency and recognition is fundamental in retaining multi-generational personnel who work well together. In fact, the commonality among the generational responses to the questions posed illustrates one constant: While varying degrees of motivational distinctions drive a specific generations' passion, ambition, and loyalty, every employee wants to feel valued and understood, which is not a generational characteristic. Rather, it is a shared human one.

May each and every person reading this, their families, friends, neighbors, and businesses remain safe, healthy and vibrant for the remainder of 2020 and beyond. **W**

HOW TO TALK TO STAFF ABOUT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



BY JULIUS DRAYTON, SENIOR VENDOR RISK AUDITOR,
SHELLPOINT MORTGAGE SERVICING,
JULIUS.DRAYTON@SHELLPOINTMTG.COM



DIVERSITY

and inclusion are hot-button topics in Corporate America today. It can be challenging to initiate these types of conversations, but please remember that short term discomfort is necessary for long term change. Here are a few things to remember when starting to have an open dialogue with staff around diversity and inclusion.

UNDERSTAND THE “WHY”

Understanding why diversity and inclusion matter is essential before starting the conversation. You should understand that diversity is not just a category, number, or a box to check. Ask yourself how you can be better, and then, how can you help others to be better too. The first step to understanding the why is to understand your own implicit biases. I recommend taking an implicit bias test. There is one that can be found created by the non-profit organization called Project Implicit: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>. These tests help you recognize biases you don't know you have. The test points out your bias, and it challenges you to see things in a different light. It will help you put yourself in someone else's shoes, and it will shine light on some biases that can affect people's lives. Emotional intelligence is also a critical tool when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Annual training based on diversity will also help with understanding the “why.”

BE VULNERABLE

Do not be afraid to be vulnerable with your staff. You want to be able to have uncomfortable conversations in comfortable settings. Give employees a safe space to talk, whether it's a group discussion or one on one.

When it comes to group discussion, remember that everyone is different and that it's not easy to start uncomfortable conversations. I recommend picking a diverse topic and opening the floor to your staff to share their thoughts or personal experiences. Some employees may be hesitant at first, so the leadership team may have to lead by example. Employees want their leaders to be open-minded, transparent, and more important-



ly, vulnerable. Employees will come out of their comfort zone if they see company leaders do the same. Everyone should be a part of uncomfortable conversations. These discussions should involve management, new employees, and employees that have been with the company for a long time. This type of discussion should be filled with people from diverse backgrounds sharing their experiences, which will allow everyone involved to learn from different perspectives. Employees that don't feel comfortable sharing experiences should be able to schedule time to speak freely one on one. You want your staff to be able to come and talk to you about anything and without having to fear judgement.

ACTIVELY LISTEN

Current events in today's society impact everyone differently. In any conversation about diversity and inclusion, always practice active listening. In order to build that safe space for employees, you must be an active listener. Active listening is listening with all senses and giving full attention to the speaker. Show the employee that you are listening by maintaining eye contact and open body language – a key factor. Leadership teams must also be open to learning from their employees. Don't ever become defensive or minimize someone else's experience. This will help your staff communicate openly and honestly.

WELCOME EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Employees want their voices to be heard, and an anonymous survey about diversity and inclusion will work. Employees are more likely to be open and honest about their experiences due to the survey being anonymous.

Incorporating a diversity and inclusion team with people from different backgrounds will help the company move forward in all aspects. This group of individuals can bring ideas from different backgrounds plus more. The most important thing with the diversity and inclusion team is recognizing that they are the

voice of the company. If there is a team, the team must bring value, so make sure you listen to the team and incorporate their ideas. Always remember that a tiny change could make a big difference.

People often get hung up on the "right time," but in reality, there is never a right time and it's something that we should just do. This topic can be critical to the success of a company, and the well-being of employees, so please remember that uncomfortable conversations should always be faced head-on. **W**



Good for Business

IMPACT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT GLOBAL COMPANIES



IN AN IDEAL WORLD, children learn the golden rule. The Golden Rule is the principle of treating others as you want to be treated. It is a maxim that is found in most religions and cultures.¹ In today's world, implementing reciprocal treatment of work colleagues, and incorporating diversity and inclusion policies and practices in the workplace, leads to more than good relationships. It impacts the financial bottom line of businesses, as illustrated by the experience of global companies.

A look back at five years of diversity and inclusion efforts shows improvement, with a long way to go. McKinsey & Company teams prepared three studies in 2015, 2018, and 2020 which researched the business case for diversity.² They published *Why Diversity Matters* in 2015, and *Delivering Through Diversity* in 2018, using data from 2014 and from 2017, respectively. For their latest publication, *Diversity Wins- How Inclusion Matters*, on May 19, 2020, McKinsey reviewed 1,000 large companies with annual revenues exceeding \$1.5 billion in fifteen countries (Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Norway, Denmark, India, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States).

In the 2020 report, companies in the top quartile of gender diversity on executive teams outperformed those in the fourth quartile by 25% based upon profitability, up from 21% in 2017, and 15% in 2014. In 2019, companies with more than 30% of women on executive teams significantly outperformed teams with less than 30% of women or with few to no women.³

In the area of ethnic and cultural diversity, companies in the top quartile outperformed those in the fourth quartile by 36% based upon profitability, up

33% from 2017 and 35% in 2014.⁴ While there has been improvement, the pace has been slow, and the gap between the top quartile and lower quartile grows, resulting in lost profitability, by as much as 20%.

McKinsey focused on three industries: financial services, technology, and healthcare. It analyzed employee comments connected to five areas: diverse representation, leadership accountability, equality, openness, and belonging. Overall, employee comments tend to be more negative than positive about all five areas, which indicates that even companies with a diverse workforce lack more complete diversity and inclusion integration.⁵

CURRENT CLIMATE

The issuance of the 2020 McKinsey report was delayed, due to the pandemic, from March 2020 to May 19, six days prior to the killing of George Floyd on May 25th in Minneapolis. Floyd's death arguably set up an intense review of diversity and inclusion policies in society and in companies.⁶ In the aftermath, executives at big U.S. companies issued statements condemning Floyd's death and promising to do more to overcome racism and improve diversity and inclusion. These companies include BlackRock, Indeed, Bank of America, Dell, Best Buy, Disney, Lowe's, FedEx, IBM, Nordstrom, Target, Expedia, Goldman Sachs, Ford, Mozilla; Citigroup, Zoom, Tapestry, Starbucks, General Motors, Wells Fargo, Facebook, PayPal, Lyft, Johnson & Johnson, Discovery, Apple, Viacom CBS, Grubhub, Snap, Intuit, Walmart, Gap, WarnerMedia and Intel.⁷

And despite having laws in place banning discrimination for several decades, blacks and minorities disproportionately lag in progress. According to My-

1 Antony Flew, ed. (1979). "golden rule". *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. London: Pan Books in association with The MacMillan Press. p. 134.

2 McKinsey & Company is a US-based management consulting firm, founded in 1926 by University of Chicago professor James O. McKinsey, that advises on strategic management to corporations, governments, and other organizations.

3 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/george-floyd-and-derek-chauvin-the-lives-of-the-victim-and-his-killer-11592761495>

7 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-executives-said-about-george-floyds-death-11591364538>



In addition to increased profitability with gender, ethnically, and cultural teams, companies with diverse boards of directors in the top quartile of gender diversity are 28% more likely to outperform the lower quartile financially.

LogIQ, a data tracker, only 1% of S&P 500 company CEOs are black, out of a total of 11% ethnic minorities who are 3% Latino, 3% Indian, 2% Asian, 1% Middle Eastern, and 1% multiracial.⁸

WHAT WINNERS DO AND CAN CONTINUE TO DO

In addition to increased profitability with gender, ethnically, and cultural teams, companies with diverse boards of directors in the top quartile of gender diversity are 28% more likely to outperform the lower quartile financially. Some countries outdo others, like France and Norway, who have an average of 40% women on their boards. However, it goes beyond the board and extends to company leadership and accountability.

In fact, the most successful companies in the diversity and inclusion space use a systemic, business-led approach, including increasing diverse representation in leadership and critical roles, and holding these leaders accountable for meeting goals. In addition to leadership, these companies take steps to strengthen inclusion, including enabling equality of opportunity through fairness and transparency; promoting openness while tacking bias and discrimination; and finally fostering belonging by supporting diversity.

Diving a little deeper, diverse representation involves thoughtful recruitment of diverse candidates utilizing data and analytics to meet key metrics, including using non-traditional recruitment methods. Diverse candidates then need accountable leaders responsible for inclusion and diverse development of their teams, going well beyond just using unconscious-bias training.

Added to these characteristics, successful companies offer equality of opportunity by making promotional opportunities transparent and de-biasing talent processes, especially connected to advancement and equal pay.

Successful companies promote and enforce a culture of tolerance and penalize those who harass, both in policies and enforcement of policies.

ONE EXAMPLE

Founded in 1902 as Goodfellow Dry Goods, Target is the eighth-largest retailer in the United States, and has had an Inclusion and Diversity office for the past 15 years.⁹ “Diversity & inclusion are at the heart of what we do at Target. 75% of the U.S. population lives within 10 miles of a Target store—and in order to win in retail, we need to reflect that population in our team to ensure we deliver the product, services, experiences and messages our guests want and need.” Brian Cornell, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Target.¹⁰

Target tracks diversity and inclusion data through its dedicated D and I analytics team. The company reviews metrics on a quarterly and annual basis, adjust goals as needed, and publishes an annual report reflecting gender and ethnic diversity. For example, in 2019, the total workforce was 50% White, 25% Latin, 15% Black/African American, and 5% Asian. Their board of directors was 54% White, 15% Black/African American, and 31% Latin. Their Officers and Leadership Team need work, though Target’s gender diversity on all levels vary between 30- 40% female and 40-70% male.¹¹

Target incorporates D and I values in its corporate culture, reflected in its motto, “stay open.” “It means **getting comfortable being uncomfortable**, and giving everyone access to the same opportunities.”¹² Target reinforces these values by forming Diversity Action Committees in each business area who work with the I and D office to implement strategies to meet D and I goals. The company also has affinity groups for race/ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, veterans, people with different abilities, and faith.¹³

In its annual metrics-driven evaluation, using corporate survey submissions, DiversityInc ranked Target thirteenth in their top 50 list in 2019. “Earning a spot on the Top 50 List is like getting a ‘Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.’”¹⁴

Target’s overall goal is to help all families discover the joy of everyday life, with an emphasis on “all.” Check back to see how they rank in 2020! **W**

⁸ <https://www.mylogiq.com/>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Target_Corporation

¹⁰ <https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/diversity-inclusion>

¹¹ https://corporate.target.com/_media/TargetCorp/csr/pdf/Target-Workforce-Diversity-Report_FY2019.pdf

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/what-is-an-affinity-group>

¹⁴ <https://www.diversityinc.com/diversityinc-top-50-lists-since-2001/>

MORE THAN A DREAM

THE GLASS CEILING, **REVISITED**

BY SARA COSTANZO, ESQ., PARTNER
WELTMAN, WEINBERG & REIS CO, L.P.A.
SCOSTANZO@WELTMAN.COM



THE TERM "GLASS CEILING"

is a metaphor used to represent an invisible barrier that keeps a given demographic, traditionally — but not exclusively women, from rising beyond a certain level in a hierarchy. The barriers are most often unwritten, meaning that women are more likely to be restricted from advancing through accepted norms and implicit biases rather than defined corporate policies?

Culturally, females are generally expected to be feminine and, therefore polite, accommodating, and nurturing, while males are expected to be masculine and, therefore competitive, aggressive, and fearless. In the workplace, managers and leaders are likewise expected to be competitive, aggressive, and fearless, aka masculine, in order to make strong business decisions and lead a team to success. Such differences in gender roles limit and can even punish women in their academic and professional careers from reaching upper-level or leadership positions.

While the term “glass ceiling” was popularized in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article¹ about the corporate hierarchy, it still exists today. Many corporate policies claim the sky is the limit, yet their behavior demonstrates the existence of this invisible ceiling.

¹ “Women have reached a certain point—I call it the glass ceiling,” Ms. Bryant told Adweek. “They’re in the top of middle management, and they’re stopping and getting stuck.” Carol Hymowitz.



Although invisible, the glass ceiling is very real, and there are plenty of statistics to back it²:

Women are
25-46%
more likely to be hired
with blind applications.

40%
of people notice a
double standard against
female candidates.

At companies where
90%
of leadership is men, half
of men at the company
view women as being
well-represented.

Men are
30%
more likely to achieve
managerial roles.

Only
38.6%
of managerial roles
are held by women.

Just
10%
of leadership in the
workplace is represented
by women.

34%
of people see male
executives as better
risk assessors.

23%
of c-suites is
represented by women.

4.1%
of Fortune 500 CEOs.
is represented by women.

Contrary to popular belief, men and women
ask for pay raises at the same rate.

Women receive pay raises
5%
less often than men.

² <https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/glass-ceiling>



In response to the growing concern over barriers preventing women and minorities from advancing, the U.S. Department of Labor launched the Glass Ceiling Commission in 1991³. The Commission was charged to conduct a study and prepare recommendations concerning:

- ✂ Eliminating artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities; and
- ✂ Increasing the opportunities and development experiences of women and minorities to foster advancement of women and minorities to management and decision-making positions in business⁴.

The Commission found that qualified women and minorities were being denied the opportunity to compete for or win decision-making positions. It also found that the perceptions of both employees and employers often included stereotypes that held women and minorities in a negative light. The Commission believes that every member of society should have the opportunity to strive for positions of responsibility and leadership, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnic background.

Glass ceilings negatively impact organizations, too. The glass ceiling is a serious economic problem

that takes a huge financial toll on businesses. Diverse groups make better decisions than homogenous ones, making shattering the glass ceiling good for a company's bottom line.

The glass ceiling is a difficult problem to tackle, but not impossible. Consider these strategies⁵ to do so.

I. RECOGNIZE THE GLASS CEILING STILL EXISTS

To break a glass ceiling, first recognize that it is there. Glass ceilings are very real barriers that women face. When aware of them, that awareness provides strength and confidence to break such barriers. Some indicating signs of the ceiling's existence may include:

- ✂ The phrase "that's just the way things are done here" is used to justify decisions.
- ✂ There is little diversity at the top.
- ✂ There is resistance to innovation and change, especially over the long-term.
- ✂ There are illogical pay gaps between different groups of employees.

³ Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 created the 21-member, bipartisan Federal Glass Ceiling Commission.

⁴ Public Law 102-166 November 21, 1991, Civil Act of 1991, Section 203.

⁵ https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_71.htm



2. WHAT TO DO AS AN EMPLOYEE

The very nature of glass ceilings means that even if positioned to meet every demand of a role, the opportunity is still being denied.

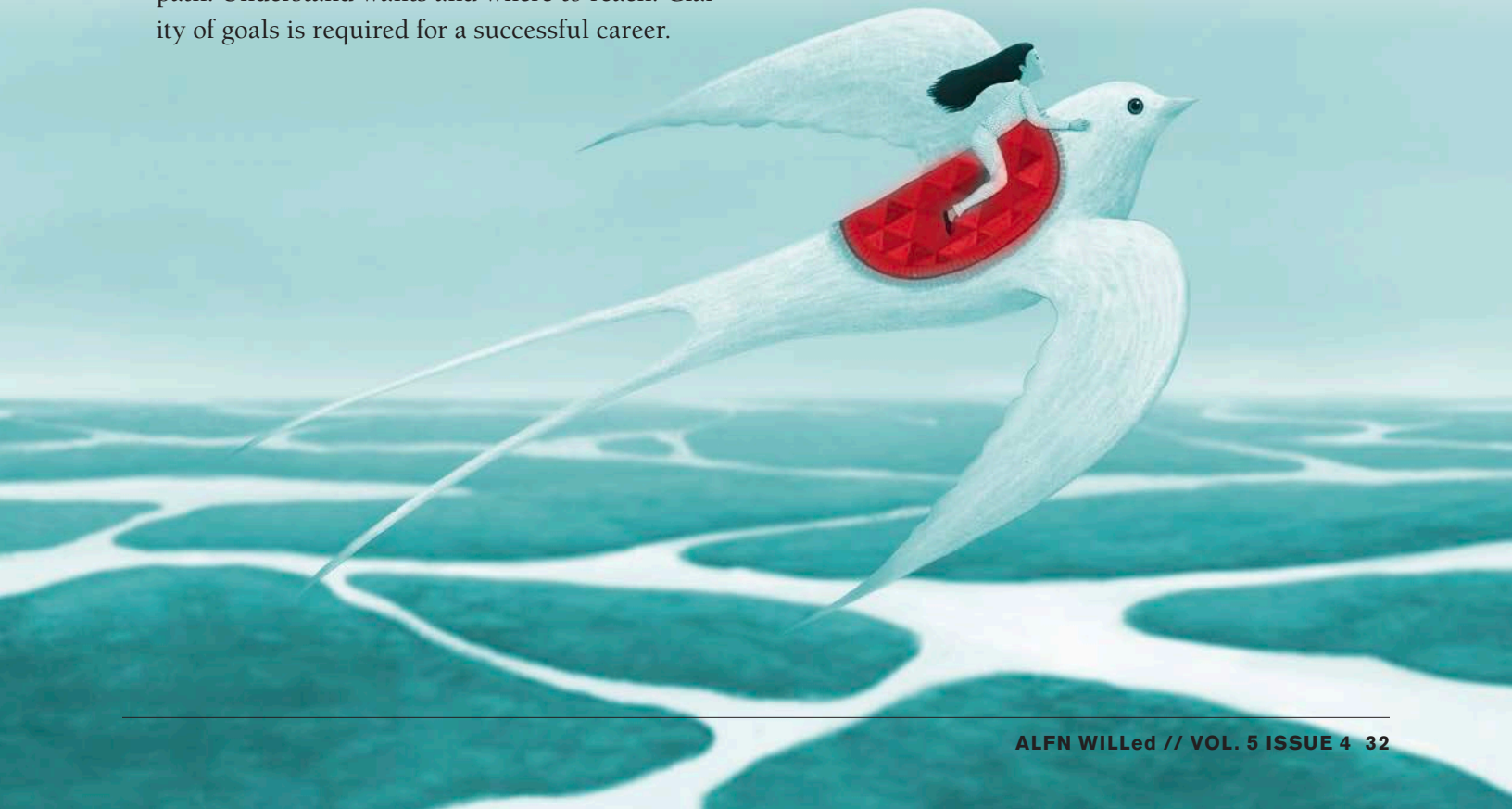
- ✂ Channel frustration into purposeful action. Experiencing or witnessing the impact of a glass ceiling can result in frustration, depression, or anger at the injustice. Use this passion as a catalyst for action, but do not allow it to control behavior.
- ✂ Develop awareness of the issue. Learn more about where glass ceilings exist in the business, who they affect, and how. The better the issue is understood, the more opportunities can be identified to promote change.
- ✂ Be patient, but assertive. Dismantling a glass ceiling will take time, but check in regularly with managers to see what progress is being made. Do not allow those at the top to “park” or forget the issue. Look for help, network, and take initiatives to increase visibility.
- ✂ Take responsibility for individual development. If not being given the opportunities deserved, it might be time to seek them elsewhere. Carve a path. Understand wants and where to reach. Clarity of goals is required for a successful career.

3. ACTIONS AN ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE

As a manager, the role in helping an organization to dismantle glass ceilings is critical. Without the input of senior leaders, change will be far harder.

- ✂ Create an open dialogue about the issue. This can mean having some difficult conversations, and it requires honest introspection from senior leaders.
- ✂ Encourage open conversations about these issues, and see where they lead. It should simply allow those who deserve opportunities to access them, regardless of gender, race, or any other factor.
- ✂ Ask team members for their views. This may help discover important facts and suggestions for improvement by asking people about their experiences.
- ✂ Encourage the organization to recognize and challenge bias.

The idea of a glass ceiling may be a hard idea to accept, but, with proper diligence, we will not merely crack, but shatter these limitations within any organization. **W**



#ChallengeAccepted

WE RECOGNIZE that our WILL Members are bravely leading their firms, companies, families, and communities through these unprecedented times. More than ever before, it is important that we stand together and support each other. In line with the recent social media “#ChallengeAccepted” campaign, the leadership of WILL challenged all of its members to share a monochrome photo of themselves with the hashtags #WILL #womensupportingwomen #ALFNWomenInLegalLeadership. We are pleased to showcase these women-supporting-women to our WILled readership, and to continue empowering all women in the ALFN.



Heidi Carey



Kathryn Maclean



Anna Spacone



Nicole Caprara, Maggie Garden and Jennifer Dlugolecki



Emily Chavarriaga and Julia Keys



Andrea Tromberg



Susan Rosen and Rosalie Escobedo



Julia Keys and Paula Marcus



Suzanne Eaton, Janice Nakano, Maryann Mack and Jane Woll

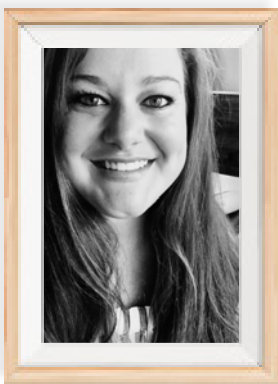


Michelle Gilbert



Tiffany Benway

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



Jillian Wilson



Julie Beyers and Susan Rosen



*Cheryl Marchant, Mary Ann Decker,
Carrie Ehinger and Rosemarie Diamond*



Marcy Ford and Caren Castle



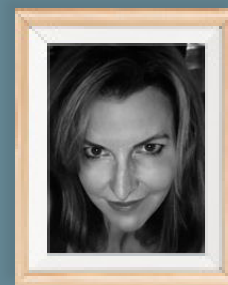
*Kathleen Kramer, Emily Chavarriaga
and Alicia Byrd*



Karyne Nguyen



Lisa Lee, Melody Jones Rickels and Sally Garrison



Jan Duke



*Janice Nakano, Suzanne Eaton,
Jane Woll and Maryann Mack*



*Tomiya Lewis, Jane Bond, Brian Vaughn, Casey Rossato,
Clara Bray, Kinnera Bhoopal and Maria Tsagaris Starks*

A Mother's COVID Reflection

By Talyn Guercio, CFO/COO, Partner
Shea Barclay Group, talyn@sheabarclay.com



ONCE MY CHILDREN entered their teenage years and became much more self-sufficient, I was under the misguided illusion that the more difficult days were behind me. After all, my husband and I have raised two mature young adults, both of whom never really test the boundaries of our collective patience. The only really “chaos” is derived from our family calendar. I would find myself on most weekdays shuttling my children from school to multiple baseball games and dance recitals, or whichever play date they unapologetically committed to without permission. Our family dynamic is not at all unique or terribly special. In fact, in the early part of this year, I would bet most families had a similar lifestyle. Everything changed though, as COVID-19 infiltrated our society, throwing us all off-balance as we became forced to reevaluate our daily habits.

In March of 2020, I don't believe that anyone could have predicted that we would still be living this nightmare. Towards the end of the first quarter, my family and I were much more cavalier about our environment and how we would approach this pandemic. The situation certainly became much more real once schools announced they would participate in “e-learning” followed by an early summer closure. While e-learning

presented its own set of challenges, schools would be closed soon, and my attention diverted to summer. My main concern was whether or not summer camps would be open, as camp was the natural substitute to occupy their time during the day. Needless to say, that did not play out the way I thought either as our country entered a “lockdown”, the first time we had ever been so limited and constrained.

The weeks and months painfully ticked away as we all became somewhat used to the confinement of our homes. We, of course, adapted and truth be told, experienced some very enjoyable times as a family that I do not think it could have been replicated. As summer drew near to a close, my new concern, like most mothers had, was trying to understand how the upcoming school year would go. By the time I was able to gather all of my thoughts and opinions, it was announced that schools would continue to revert to e-learning as they had done prior to summer break. While this form of education varies by school district and there-

are accountable to many others as well. If children are in school, educators must now teach under the guise of new health and safety codes. They did not ask to be in this situation but nonetheless remain committed to their profession, all while managing their own personal lives. I also could not mention the admiration I have for teachers without noting my own inabilities. In some cases, parents, myself included, had to re-learn subjects they consciously decided to forget decades earlier. I re-learned some subjects along the way and mathematical deficiencies aside, my children and I have been able to spend much more time together. I



fore does not apply to all students, it was nonetheless my reality which has continued to the present day. Although there are spontaneous eruptions that seem to erode some of my attained perseverance, I thought it to be appropriate to acknowledge what I've learned along the way.

Perhaps the chief lesson of my educational epiphany is the respect I have for teachers. Not only are they responsible for teaching my children on a good day, they

have had a keen sense of satisfaction from being more involved in their daily routine. That is not to say personal time is not equally important and I have found that making time for myself is significant. We all have chaos in our lives and COVID-19 is only fanning those flames. It's a time of our lives where finding a positive aspect is difficult. I have found though, that being with my family, while remaining empathetic to others, is the best I can offer. **W**

Diversity & Inclusion

By Karyne Nguyen, AVP, Corporate Social Responsibility,
Mr. Cooper, karyne.nguyen@mrcooper.com



EMBARKING ON THE DIVERSITY and inclusion journey is a unique path for each person, shaped by our upbringing, values, ideals, and experiences. Through my personal journey, I have learned to acknowledge what makes me different and embrace it in order to use my voice, for myself and for others.

My journey starts with reflections of my parents' story and how I grew up. My parents were refugees following the Vietnam War and had the opportunity to come to the United States through sponsorship, where either a family member or an organization like a church could sponsor refugees and guide them to life in America. After my father and mother arrived in 1975 and 1980, respectively, they married, and each focused on building a career and future.

Along with my sister, I am a first-generation Asian American born and raised in a suburb outside of Dallas, Texas. Growing up, my parents were masterful at helping me balance both my Asian and American roots. From attending local Lunar New Year festivals

in a traditional Vietnamese Áo dài (translated as a “long dress”) or enjoying the tastes and aromas of Vietnamese cuisine, I was always surrounded by elements of my culture. As I grew into adulthood, I aimed to learn about my parents' life in Vietnam, their journeys in America, and how it would shape me – my understanding of their sacrifice, strength, and humility became even clearer as an adult.

In my professional journey, I have been building my career at Mr. Cooper since 2011, where I have held various roles within the servicing and compliance operations. In 2017, Mr. Cooper Group launched its Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Cooper Resource Teams, our version of employee resource groups



*"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
– Chinese Proverb from Philosopher Laozi*

(ERGs). Asians in Motion (AIM) was the first team to launch, and I immediately sought to get involved in supporting the Asian American community. Through our resource teams, employees are empowered to develop leadership skills by volunteering to serve on the team's Officer Committee. I chose to get involved in this way and have been actively engaged with the team for the past three years, approaching the end of my second term as AIM's President. As I reflect on those years, it has been one of the greatest, most fulfilling opportunities in my career.

Being involved in AIM has been nothing short of a transformative journey – in my professional development, it has made me a stronger leader, communicator, creator, and appreciative that I am at a company that recognizes the voices of Asian Americans. The team has provided a platform to further embrace my Asian roots and find joy in sharing Asian cultures with colleagues of all backgrounds; leading the team has elevated my pride in being an Asian American and allowed me to not only share my own culture but the multitude of cultures, traditions, and practices that are encompassed by the Asian American community.

One of the most defining testaments of my journey is that it paved a new career path for me. Through the years of volunteering to serve as an Officer, I found and fostered a passion for working with people and making a positive impact on the employee experience. In November 2019, I made a career transition and am now on the Office of Diversity and Inclusion team within our Corporate Social Responsibility department. I currently oversee and work with our seventeen Cooper Resource Teams (and growing), support them in their success, and witness the amazing work they do within Mr. Cooper Group and the community.

As I reflect on my journey thus far, it started with my parents teaching me about my Vietnamese roots and the perspective I could bring as a person. Those experiences translated into my career, where I am now dedicated to helping my company and the industry leverage diversity, promote equity, and empower each person to have a voice. Whether you are continuing your diversity and inclusion journey or have yet to start it, it is never too late to make a difference for others in the workplace and our society – it all begins with a single step. **W**

Embracing Diversity and Inclusion

By Marissa M. Yaker, Esq., Managing Attorney of Foreclosure,
Padgett Law Group, Marissa.yaker@padgettlawgroup.com



“87% of global businesses say diversity and inclusion is an organizational priority.”¹ Out of that 87%, only 37% of the businesses surveyed task their leaders with specific diversity and inclusion goals, and 42% admit that diversity is still a barrier to employee progression within the company.²

Diversity in the workplace has been defined as “understanding, accepting, and valuing differences between people, including those: of different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, religions, disabilities, and sexual orientations; with differences in education, personalities, skill sets, experiences, and knowledge bases”³

At Padgett Law Group, most of the leadership at the firm is managed by female leaders. Additionally, roughly 60% of Padgett Law Group’s employees are women. As one of the female leaders, I can honestly say that I feel supported daily in my role. We truly work as a team to ensure that we are covering each other’s perspectives. In general, all our leaders speak daily, and ensure that we are all on the same page with how we are proceeding as a firm. We are a diverse group of individuals who all want the same thing: to provide the best service that we can to our Clients and appreciate/respect one another’s opinions.

We are a team through in through, and everyone’s opinion is valued and listened to. Everyone comes from different backgrounds, and everyone brings something different to the table. Accordingly, regarding programs that have taken place at Padgett, it all stems from communication, and being available, and respectful to one another.

We focus on building a team environment and being open to continuously improving. That alone helps ensure that everyone has a voice, and is free to voice their concerns.

Everything stems from the top, and Tim and Robyn Padgett remind us daily that each of us brings something to the table, and that our voices and opinions matter. This is echoed by the fact that 66% percent of firm leaders have been promoted internally. While we are a law firm, we are a team, and teamwork truly does make the dream work. **W**

¹ Greesonbach, Sarah, Glassdoor for Employees, Diversity & Inclusion Research Roundup: Top Studies You Need to Know, February 22, 2019, <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/blog/diversity-inclusion-research-roundup-top-studies-you-need-to-know/>

² Greesonbach, Sarah, Glassdoor for Employees, Diversity & Inclusion Research Roundup: Top Studies You Need to Know, February 22, 2019, <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/blog/diversity-inclusion-research-roundup-top-studies-you-need-to-know/>

³ Mondal, Somen, Ideal Blog, Diversity and Inclusion: A Complete Guide for HR Professionals, <https://ideal.com/diversity-and-inclusion/>

What Pronouns Do You Prefer?

The Importance of Normalizing Conversations about Gender Identity in the Workplace

By Sydney Rasch, Esq., Attorney,
Padgett Law Group, sydney.rasch@padgettlawgroup.com



On my first day at my first job as an attorney, I walked into my new office at Padgett Law Group and sat down with my boss while we went over paperwork and watched as IT remotely got my computer up and running. The hum of the office was friendly and welcoming, and I felt comfortable in the new skin I had put on that morning – *attorney*. Though it was a little foreign, I knew who I was that day when I walked in, and I knew I would still be the same person when I left.

After completing my initial paperwork, I sat down at my desk to log in to my computer. I spread my fingers over the smooth keys on the laptop, imagining what was to come. My email popped up, so I decided to go ahead and create my email signature based on the others I saw from our firm. Adding “*Esq.*” to the end of my name was an exciting moment; then, at the end, underneath the line stating which state I was licensed in, I added a final line of text:

“Pronouns: she, her, hers”

At that point, I had not considered whether our email signatures were supposed to be uniform, or whether this was even allowed; I did it because I include my pronouns in my personal email signature and it was important to me to include in my professional emails. I choose to include my pronouns so that my peers can, 1) know mine, and, 2) feel comfortable including theirs. The firm is aware of the change to my signature line but

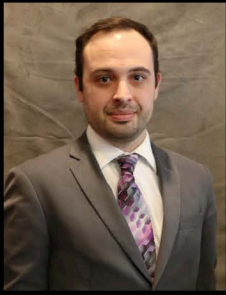


has not asked me to change it and only “questioned” it in the same spirit as this article, a spirit of seeking understanding and clarity on why I include my pronouns. I am grateful for that. It’s the same kind of question I hope this article answers more broadly, along with the conversation this author hopes it sparks, as it has with my colleagues internally.

Personally, I identify as a cis-gender woman, although I frequently receive mis-gendered in emails due to my unisex name. I recognize that this privilege conveys everything about who I am and how I am perceived by colleagues, judges, and the public. In my opinion, our gender identity is who we feel we are when we wake up in the morning, whether it is female, male, both, neither, or somewhere in between. *Cis-gender* can be defined as having a gender identity that aligns with the sex you were assigned at birth. Being involved in the LGBTQ+ community for a long time, I quickly learned that the world is not just a gender binary – it is a gender spectrum. Now, when I meet someone for the first time and I am unsure how they identify, I ask a simple question: “What pronouns do you prefer?” Typically, this is answered easily with a quick “*he/him*” or “*they/them*”, and the conversation moves on. When you normalize conversations about gender identity, you normalize the acceptance of all individuals, regardless of gender identity. Upon introduction to a new person, I feel

it is my obligation to see them the way they want to be seen. By including my personal pronouns, I have recognized this obligation, and from the outset of our introduction, by a simple question or inclusion of my pronouns in an email, I have already shown them: *I see you, and I respect you*. PLG has recognized this, and we continue to have important conversations about work environments that remain inclusive and welcoming, so that everyone who comes to work at PLG feels as welcome as I did on my first day.

The old adage that you should leave who you are at home is no longer *est quod est*; rather, in the fast-changing landscape of the American workplace, it is *quod vita sit facere!* When you go to work, you don’t leave who you are at home. This is especially true when so many of us now work in our homes, where we feel most comfortable – and vulnerable. Whatever your title, when you walk into the office or sit down at your dining room table to log in, you come as you are. Many companies have started to recognize this in recent years, and celebrate employees for who they are, their personal accomplishments, their hopes, their dreams. By showing that respecting gender is a part of the everyday culture of a company through adopting something as simple as the inclusion of pronouns in the company email signature line, others can simply see that and know: When I leave my house today for my new job, I can be who I am without fear. **W**



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